

Canada-Funded Initiative Results in Major Gains for Biodiversity, Gender Equality and Communities in Southeast Asia

CA\$20 Million Investment Enabled Conservation Action in Cambodia, Lao PDR and Thailand

ARLINGTON, VA, UNITED STATES, July 30, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The Government of Canada fueled important advances in conservation and the leadership of women, Indigenous Peoples, and communities in some of the world's most biodiverse ecosystems through CA\$20 million (US\$14.4 million) of support delivered through the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF).

The investment, made through Global Affairs Canada, funded 100 grants to civil society organizations in the Indo-Burma Biodiversity Hotspot in Southeast Asia as well as the Cerrado and Tropical Andes Biodiversity Hotspots in South America during 2025. These hotspots host ecosystems that are teeming with biodiversity, provide essential services to humanity, such as fresh water and carbon storage, and are highly threatened. The funding supported community-based conservation and/or sustainable-use initiatives that targeted more than 28,000 square kilometers of Key Biodiversity Areas.

Beneficiaries of the funding included not only civil society organizations but also women,



Fish conservation zone, Ubon Ratchathani, Thailand.
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Sarus cranes, Cambodia. © Him Khunmy

Indigenous Peoples and local communities who the organizations partnered with to achieve conservation and sustainable management of biodiversity. The funding additionally promoted gender equality by strengthening leadership skills among female conservationists and the gender policies and practices of organizations.

The countries benefiting from this investment were:

- Indo-Burma Biodiversity Hotspot: Cambodia, Lao PDR and Thailand.
- Cerrado Biodiversity Hotspot: Brazil.
- Tropical Andes Biodiversity Hotspot: Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru.

In the Indo-Burma Biodiversity Hotspot:

- 3,915 square kilometers of Key Biodiversity Areas saw reductions in threats to biodiversity and 44 globally threatened species experienced reduced threats through the projects.
- 6,254 women and 6,735 men received cash benefits from conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity.
- Community-based conservation/sustainable-use initiatives were supported for more than 3,534 square kilometers of Key Biodiversity Areas.
- 294 women and 232 men demonstrated increased capacity to design and implement community-based conservation projects.
- 76 community natural resource management bodies developed management plans to address threats to Key Biodiversity Areas and/or threatened species.
- 25,374 females and 28,391 males received non-cash benefits, including improved land tenure, increased food security and increased access to water.
- 13 Civil society organizations developed an organizational gender action plan and implemented at least one measure to address barriers to gender inclusivity.

Examples of results totaled from all three hotspots to date include:

- 12,000 square kilometers of Key Biodiversity Areas and 88 globally threatened species with reduced threats from fires, illegal hunting, encroachment and mining.
- Improved land tenure, food security and water access for 89,454 women and 91,413 men.
- New or updated gender action plans for 93 organizations.
- 86 organizations implementing actions that support gender equality, such as: zero-tolerance policies on sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment; gender-sensitive hiring; childcare provisions; and women's mentorship and leadership pathways.
- Among grant-recipient organizations, 57 more women in technical roles, 17 more women in supervisory roles and 22 more women in leadership roles.

"Protecting the world's most biodiverse ecosystems is not only vital for the local communities who live in them; it is also an investment in the wellbeing of Canadians. Our economies are embedded in nature, not external to it. Canadians depend on goods and services provided by ecosystems outside of Canada. The results of our support for CEPF reflect Canada's commitment to practical, locally driven solutions to create positive results for people and the planet." said Céline Heinbecker, Director, Environment and Climate Partnerships Division, Global Affairs Canada.

The funding was from Canada's International Biodiversity Program (2023-2026), which helped developing countries to implement the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework to halt and reverse global biodiversity loss. The Program supported partnerships with women, local communities and Indigenous Peoples, and targeted conservation and restoration efforts.

CEPF is a joint initiative that includes the Government of Canada as well as l'Agence Française de Développement, Conservation International, the European Union, Fondation Franklinia, Fondation Hans Wilsdorf, the Global Environment Facility, the Government of Japan, the Hempel Foundation, The Nature Conservancy and the World Bank. The initiative supports civil society to protect the world's biodiversity hotspots: biologically rich ecosystems that are essential to humanity, yet highly threatened.

"The results achieved thanks to the funding from the Government of Canada have provided a powerful demonstration of what is possible when conservation is community-led and gender equality is prioritized," said Olivier Langrand, CEPF's executive director.

The International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Asia served as CEPF's regional implementation team for the Indo-Burma Biodiversity Hotspot for the Canada-funded initiative, helping to build local capacity and implement CEPF's conservation strategy.

The long-term commitment of CEPF to the three target hotspots supported by the Government of Canada investment means that CEPF will continue efforts to sustain and build on the results achieved. Best practices gathered through the grants are being shared via CEPF's Learning Hub.

For project examples and direct links to the best practices materials:

<https://www.cepf.net/bestpracticesandprojectsIndo-Burma>

About Global Affairs Canada

Global Affairs Canada, a department of the Government of Canada, defines, shapes and advances Canada's interests and values in a complex global environment. It manages diplomatic relations, promotes international trade and provides consular assistance. It leads international development, humanitarian, and peace and security assistance efforts. It also contributes to national security and the development of international law. Learn more at www.international.gc.ca, [X](#), [Facebook](#), Instagram, [LinkedIn](#).

About the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund

The Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) fills a unique, strategic role in addressing the extinction and climate crises by mobilizing and supporting civil society—nongovernmental organizations, Indigenous and local communities, academic institutions and more—to protect the world's biodiversity hotspots. The fund is a joint initiative of l'Agence Française de Développement, Conservation International, the European Union, Fondation Franklinia, Fondation Hans Wilsdorf, the Global Environment Facility, the Government of Canada, the

Government of Japan, Hempel Foundation, The Nature Conservancy and the World Bank. Since 2001, CEPF has catalyzed enduring, locally led biodiversity conservation through over US\$345 million in grants to more than 2,800 organizations in 112 developing and transitional countries. Results include more than 17 million hectares of formal protected areas established, more than 1,300 globally threatened species supported, and more than 6,700 communities benefiting. Learn more at www.cepf.net.

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